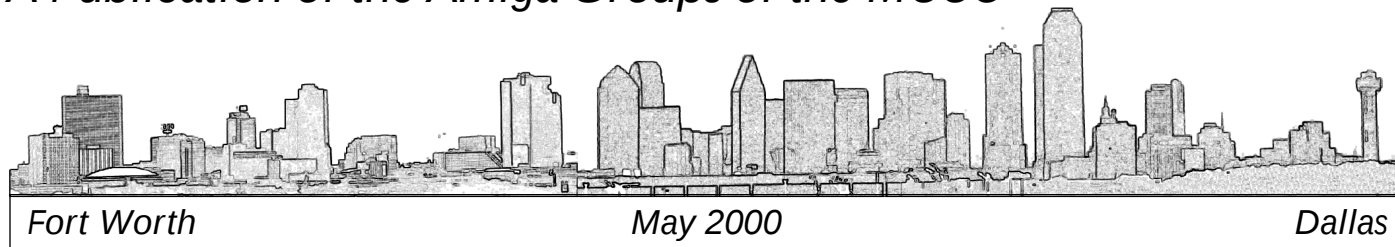


The AGM Connection

A Publication of the Amiga Groups of the MCCC



The New Amiga Vision

Imagine...

At the banquet at Amiga 2K, we saw a demonstration of the Tao operating system running on top of a Linux box. We watched as Fleecy Moss first popped up one window after another which held various small applications, and the machine responded with out a moment's hesitation. But, then the real awe inspiring demo commenced. He opened three windows, two of which had instantiations of Quake running, and the third of which held an instantiation of Doom. All three games ran flawlessly. It was very impressive.

But, what made it really impressive was what was being demonstrated. As Fleecy ran the demo, Bill McEwen made the point from the podium that there was no hardware acceleration on this machine. It had a nice processor — a 500 MHz Pentium III — but no graphics card. Everything that we were seeing was going through the main processor.

But, there was more here than that. The machine was running a Linux OS, but it had an abstraction layer on top of it. The abstraction layer masks the Linux OS, such that the applications which were running are not specifically targeted for Linux, but are instead targeted for this abstraction layer. That is, these applications are written for a different OS — and that OS is what will become the Amiga OS.

This is really just an extension of Sun's Java concept. Indeed, Tao's operating system really is based upon a Java Virtual Machine. Sun's slogan for Java is "write once, run anywhere." The whole point of writing a program in Java is that you will be able to turn around and run that same program, without porting or even a new compile, on any machine.

Which is an exciting theory. But, everyone knows what's wrong with Java.

It's slow.

But it isn't anymore.

The thing that made this a slack-jaw demonstration for anyone who understood what they were seeing — the thing that made some of us wonder if what we were seeing was even real — is that it was running at mind blurring speed, flawlessly, through an abstraction layer.

To understand the point, imagine that you are a games developer. You write the latest, hottest, 3D fantasy masterpiece, and you want to sell it to as many people as possible. In today's world, that means that you pick one of many competing game platforms — Play Station, Nintendo, PC, Mac, Amiga, etc. for which to write your game. You make your choice based upon which market you think you can sell the most games into. You write the game for that machine, getting all of the bugs out of the code, and putting together your story and graphics. Then, if the first release is a success, you might port the game to a different platform. But, this could take another six months to a year, and keeps you from working on the sequel, or on another brilliant idea. And, if your first release does not sell, you probably won't bother with a port at all. So, if you picked wrong, a game that may have been a success on another platform could flop on the one you picked. Plus, to get to the widest possible market requires a lot of work, as you do two or three ports.

Now, here's how Amiga is proposing to change that. Imagine that you write the game for the new Amiga. In every conceivable environment — PC, Mac, game console, or even server — there exists an Amiga abstraction layer. So, your game will run on every machine out there, as long as the end user has the Amiga abstraction layer. So, on the day you release the game for the Amiga, you also release it for the PC, the Mac, the Play Station, the Nintendo — in principal, even for workstations and servers. The basic Amiga release assumes that the end user already has the Amiga abstraction layer running on his machine. But, it wouldn't be that hard to make a "PC bundle" that included the game and the Amiga abstraction layer for the PC (which you would charge more for, and pay a license to Amiga for).

I use games as an example for several reasons. One is that there are several clearly visible competing games platforms out there, and this makes the advantages very clear. A second is that there are a lot of games released every year, and there is a lot of financial incentive for this type of approach. The third is that games really do tend to push the hardware and software performance of a system. If you can do this for games, which Amiga has demonstrated that you can (three copies of Doom, and one of Quake on a system without 3D graphics acceleration), then you can do it for anything.

And that's the other point. You can do it for anything. Write a really cool paint program once, and sell it to everyone in the graphics arts community, no matter what machine they are on. Write a good word processor, and sell it to everyone. Write a powerful financial package or database, and your end customer can run it on every machine in his office, from the PC to the mainframe.

During the UGN meeting, McEwen was asked if we should be careful about keeping these plans within the community, which we had heard from someone else who recently stood at the helm of Amiga. The real question was do we have to worry about Microsoft.

His response was "I'm not worried about Microsoft. Microsoft represents no competition to us. We will have one OS that can run on everything from a cell phone to a server. No one else has that."

One OS from a cell phone to a server. Write your application once, and run it on every box and information appliance made. That is the new Amiga vision, and it is a powerful vision indeed.

...Joe Obrin, RMAU

< <http://www.io.com/~joeobrin/A2KVision.html> >

The AGM Connection

MCCC

P.O. Box 813

Bedford, Texas 76095

Please Forward

Address Correction Requested

<http://www.startext.com/np/agm/>

May Calendar

- May 8 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Ctr.
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills*
- May 8 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 10:00 pm — TGI Friday's
Loop 820 & Bedford Euless Road*
- May 18 — Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — SMU Building
Collins Blvd. & International Pkwy, Richardson*
- May 27 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am*

New AGM Dues

At the last MCCC Board of Directors meeting, the Board voted to change the club dues. Beginning immediately, club dues will be reduced to \$18 a year, or \$10 for a six month membership. The reduction applies to all new or renewing memberships. The change will have no affect on existing memberships.

The Board is pleased to be able to offer this reduction at this time. This is the first dues reduction in the history of the club. The \$18 annual membership returns us to the same dues structure that existed when the club was founded more than seventeen years ago.

Don't you wish everything was the same price as it was 17 years ago?